



# Executive Summary

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**T**he mission of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) is to protect children, the elderly, and people with disabilities from abuse, neglect, and exploitation. A nine-member council appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate makes recommendations regarding the agency's rules and policies. The DFPS Commissioner is appointed by the Executive Commissioner of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission and directs approximately 6,700 employees in five administrative districts further divided into 11 regions, and a state headquarters in Austin. Four major programs make up DFPS: Child Protective Services (CPS), Adult Protective Services (APS), Child Care Licensing (CCL), and Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI).

### Agency Reform

In 2004, several cases from Adult Protective Services (APS) and Child Protective Services (CPS) generated increased attention from the news media and elected officials. As a result, the Governor issued Executive Order RP 33 on April 14, 2004 and Executive Order RP 35 on July 2, 2004. The orders called for the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to review and reform Adult Protective Services and Child Protective Services.

HHSC's response included an independent review of cases, training procedures, policy, management and organizational structure, data analysis, personnel records, and statutes related to APS and CPS.

In October 2004, HHSC issued a report that made a number of recommendations to improve APS: divide workload between investigative and social work staff; increase worker accountability; reorganize management structure to ensure more compliance with statewide policy; increase training; revise statutes to allow psychologists to make house calls rather than medical doctors or psychiatrists; increase coordination with law enforcement; revise how workers determine clients' capacity to consent for services; and review guardianship issues. In December 2004, HHSC issued a report that identified six priorities for improving CPS. They were reducing caseloads, ensuring a well-trained

work force, retaining experienced staff, ensuring compliance with policies and procedures, developing effective community partnerships, and ensuring outcomes that focus on children.

These reports formed the basis for corrective actions and recommendations for consideration in 2005 by the 79th Texas Legislature.

### Child Protective Services-Highlights

- ◆ In 2004, CPS had two programs to better support extended families caring for children who come into our custody. Supporting and Educating Relatives As Placements (SERAPE) was launched in five South Texas Counties in 2004. Comprehensive Relative Enhancement, Support, and Training (CREST) kinship care initiative, which began in Bexar County seven years ago, was expanded in 2004. Services include case management, training and support groups, family counseling, and day care. The SERAPE initiative also provides some limited financial assistance.
- ◆ In December 2003, CPS implemented the Family Group Decision-Making Initiative to strengthen the participation of extended family members in planning for the safety, permanency and well being of children in substitute care. CPS also expanded parent collaboration groups, which are designed to give parents who are involved in the system a greater voice in improving overall services.
- ◆ In response to the passage of Senate Bill 1489, in the regular session of the 78th Legislature, Child Protective Services began a unique collaboration with Texas' faith-based communities in 2004. Through this partnership called Congregations Helping in Love and Dedication (CHILD), CPS has increased its collaborations with faith-based community groups to find loving homes for children who have come into the state's care due to abuse and neglect.

### Adult Protective Services-Highlights

- ◆ In 2004, APS further strengthened its quality assurance program. Efforts included developing surveys to measure client outcomes, and evaluating local compliance with statewide policy. All APS districts implemented quality assurance projects to improve services in their area of the state.
- ◆ In 2004, APS worked with the Baylor College of Medicine Texas Elder Abuse and Mistreatment (TEAM) Institute to establish a telemedicine project for the Houston and Amarillo areas. Telemedicine is an area of increased interest for APS as it involves the use of advanced telecommunications technologies for medical and mental health assessments.





- ◆ APS staff strengthened ties with law enforcement by distributing elder abuse awareness videos to South Texas law enforcement agencies that are shown during police roll call. Training sessions were also held between APS and law enforcement agencies in Arlington, Corpus Christi, Houston, San Angelo, and San Antonio.

### **Child Care Licensing-Highlights**

- ◆ Working with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), DFPS Licensing staff revised rules related to a type of 24-hour care known as “therapeutic camps.” The new standards bring these types of programs into compliance with other residential treatment operations.
- ◆ For the first time, the majority of Licensing inspectors and investigators were issued digital cameras to help them document the facility inspection process. Workers gained the ability to photograph playground equipment and potential safety hazards and immediately review the digital photos with supervisors. As a result, there was a reduction in the number of administrative reviews.
- ◆ Staff enhanced the Child Care Licensing Automated Support System (CLASS) to allow child-care providers to log in and submit criminal background checks through the Internet. CCL staff use the CLASS system to enter all pertinent information about regulated operations and agencies, including monitoring, inspections, and investigations.

### **Prevention and Early Intervention-Highlights**

- ◆ PEI updated the statewide inventory of prevention service providers in March 2004. The inventory contains the names and contact information for hundreds of organizations and agencies that provide services to prevent child abuse and neglect, juvenile delinquency, and academic failure.
- ◆ Staff developed new outcome measures for PEI programs to ensure that the services delivered accomplish the goals of the programs and make a positive difference in the lives of those served. Staff will incorporate these new measures into contracts starting in fiscal year 2005.
- ◆ PEI streamlined many of the processes undertaken in contracting with community agencies. As a result, DFPS and these agencies will be able to collaborate more efficiently and effectively.

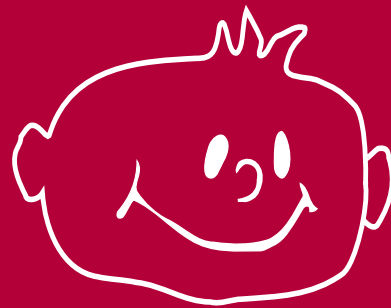
### **Other Changes and Initiatives**

- ◆ During fiscal year 2004, the agency had almost a complete renewal of its executive staff, including a new commissioner, deputy commissioner, and assistant commissioners for Child Protective Services, Adult Protective Services, and Purchased Client Services (the latter includes the Prevention and Early Intervention program).

- ◆ Volunteers and community involvement play an important role at DFPS. Volunteer programs rely heavily on public-private partnerships. In 2003, DFPS centralized management and coordination of its volunteer programs to increase their effectiveness. The Office of Volunteer and Community Engagement helps link community resources through volunteers and community partnerships. It establishes policies and procedures for statewide community engagement and volunteer resource development, and provides direction to regional and state headquarters for the development and implementation of volunteer plans and activities. In 2004, more than 3,600 groups and individuals contributed almost 170,000 hours of their time to assist DFPS caseworkers deliver important services to our clients.
- ◆ In 2004, the functions of forecasting statistics, strategic planning, and employee grievance hearings were moved to the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC). The function of human services for all HHSC agencies, which was consolidated to HHSC in fiscal year 2003, will be outsourced in 2005. HHSC has also consolidated purchasing for all of its agencies, which gives agencies the benefit of leveraging their purchasing power.

### Office of Consumer Affairs

DFPS has a positive impact in the lives of the people we serve. When clients have case-specific complaints about our actions, they may contact the Office of Consumer Affairs at 1-800-720-7777 for an impartial review of their case. The review determines if the agency's policies have been followed properly. If corrective action is needed, DFPS offers a variety of solutions such as administrative reviews, hearings, and mediation. During fiscal year 2004, the Office of Consumer Affairs received 8,078 contacts from various sources including the public, clients, elected officials, other agencies, and DFPS staff. Of the total contacts received, 2,905 were handled as case-specific complaints, and 493 were inquiries from elected officials. The validation rate of complaints was 2.6 percent. During fiscal year 2004, the Office of Consumer Affairs worked with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission's Ombudsman Office, which established a toll-free line for people to report complaints in response to the Governor's ordered statewide investigation into the practices and procedures of Child Protective Services. 🍀



**LOOK  
BEFORE YOU  
LEAVE**

**D**uring the summer of 2003, 10 Texas children, most of them infants, died after being left in vehicles in which they had been riding. In fact, the Lone Star State led the nation for the number of such fatalities. None of these children would have died if their adult caregivers had remembered to remove them from their vehicles once they arrived at their destination.

Although no single entity can prevent such tragedies, DFPS took the initiative to try to reduce the chances of another terrible toll in the summer of 2004. Three of the agency's divisions, Child Protective Services, Child Care Licensing, and Prevention and Early Intervention, developed a statewide public awareness campaign on the dangers of leaving children in hot cars.

The campaign, called "Look Before You Leave" ([www.lookbeforeyouleave.org](http://www.lookbeforeyouleave.org)), included billboards, radio public service announcements, and news conferences in Abilene, Amarillo, Austin, Beaumont, Corpus Christi, Dallas/Fort Worth, El Paso, Laredo, Lubbock, Midland, the Rio Grande Valley, San Angelo, Victoria, and Wichita Falls. Agency staff participated in public awareness activities with child care providers, law enforcement, emergency medical staff, and elected officials.

The campaign ran from Memorial Day to Labor Day 2004. Three Texas children died in hot cars that summer, compared to 10 the year before.